

the Senate on Tuesday, May 15, 2001, at 10 a.m., for a hearing regarding the Financial Outlook of the United States Postal Service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet to conduct a hearing on Tuesday, May 15, 2001, at 2 p.m., in Dirksen 226.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on May 15, 2001, at 10 a.m., to hold a closed hearing on intelligence matters.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY THREATS AND CAPABILITIES

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities of the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, May 15, 2001, at 2:30 p.m., in open and closed sessions to receive testimony on the Department of Energy's defense nuclear nonproliferation programs, in review of the defense authorization request for fiscal year 2002 and the future years defense program.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Travis Sullivan, a fellow in Senator CANTWELL's office, be granted floor privileges during the consideration of S. 1, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Janet Whitehurst of my staff be granted the privilege of the floor during the remainder of the debate on S. 1.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE EDUCATION BILL

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, we have several important amendments pending, but I would like to spend a few minutes discussing the very heart of the bill: Accountability and assessments. I believe the bill before us is the most dramatic reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act since 1965. I would like everyone to understand what is in this bill so they can understand how dramatic an impact it will have upon every school in this Nation.

For the first time, we will require all children in grades 3-8 to be annually

assessed, and that schools, districts, and States will face consequences if they fail to improve the performance of their students.

Each year—year in, year out—every level of education will be held accountable for showing measurable progress for each group of students they serve. This is the central feature of the legislation, and yet, to judge from press reports and editorials, it is very poorly understood.

I want to do what I can this evening to make sure it is widely understood in this Nation how dramatic the changes are for which we are about to vote.

I am not probably known for unwavering support for the President's agenda, nor, I hope, am I known for going out of my way to criticize the press. But I rise today both to defend the President and to suggest that the press has been sloppy in its reporting and editorial writing on what should be the central issue of the story, education reform.

For the past week or two, there have been a few press accounts and editorials implying that somehow the President or the Senate has caved to pressure, has watered down the standards in this bill, or has walked away from real reform.

In fairness to the press, I realize this is a difficult subject to cover. The topic can be a bit dense, and there is no real bright line as to the kind of progress we can expect from students and schools.

On Thursday, the lead editorial in USA Today read: "Congress Set to Dilute Education Reform," while the sub-head read: "Lawmakers gut school accountability, turn backs on minorities."

That editorial is but one example of what I think is the lack of understanding about this bill, especially, it seems, in the press. And while my opinion, of course, is just that, it is based on a wealth of data that can be verified independently. Not only do I think it can be verified, I think it is the obligation of the press to do so before it makes value-laden judgments.

In order to understand where we are, a bit of background is necessary. The major education proposals before the Congress have at their core the requirement that States and schools set high standards in core subject matters and that they measure whether students are achieving those standards; further, that we pay particular attention to the progress of our lowest-achieving students. In other words, we are going to look at the groups of students, as well as the students on a general basis, to make sure that no child is left behind.

As reported from committee, both H.R. 1 and S. 1 contain the notion that all students would be proficient in math and reading in 10 years and that a school or school district or State that failed to meet this standard would be deemed to have failed—let me repeat that—and that a school or school

district or State that failed to meet this standard would be deemed to have failed.

Further, progress in meeting this goal would be monitored on an annual basis. If a school or district or State failed to make the so-called adequate yearly progress—a term I will use over and over again, "adequate yearly progress," or, for short, AYP—it would be identified as needing school improvement—another phrase to remember—or subject to sanctions if improvement efforts failed.

The concept of AYP is an important one because adequate yearly progress is the bar for judging whether a school or district or State has succeeded or failed.

Legislating that all students should be proficient in 10 years is a wonderful goal, and perhaps for this reason none of us really gave it much thought. Having been involved in the passage of the Goals 2000 Act some years ago, having served on the national goals panel, I must confess that I have become a little wiser about our ability to achieve wonderful goals.

For my colleagues who may not be familiar with the Goals 2000 Act, in it we codified very ambitious goals that we hoped to achieve by the year 2000. For example, back in 1994, we called for our students to be first in the world in math and science—that was a big goal, a goal that we are so far from having fulfilled—and that all students leaving 4th, 8th, and 12th grades would do so with demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter, including English, math, science, foreign language, and so on, all by the year 2000.

Well, 2000 has come and gone. In my view, we have made only limited progress in reaching those goals. We have a long way to go, especially in these goals directly relating to academics. I don't think the lesson to take from this experience is that goals are a bad idea. Rather, I think the lesson is that an unrealistic goal, linked to very real consequences, is a bad idea.

The goal contained in S. 1, as it was reported from the HELP Committee, that all students would be proficient in 10 years, was both admirable and entirely unrealistic. That will explain why we have done what we have. It gives me no great pleasure to say this. I have spent a good part of my career in a continuing effort to improve education for all students, beginning in my very first year in Congress in 1975. Like anyone, I take some pride in my work. I would much rather correct a glaring problem in a piece of legislation before it is reported from my committee, but as has been noted before, wisdom is a rare commodity which should not be rejected merely because it arrives late.

Unlike some of the issues we confront in this Chamber, we have a solid amount of experience in the results of education reform and educational assessment. The same year we put in place the national education goals, we